

The Curriculum That Has No Name: A Choreo-pedagogy for Colored Girls Seeking to Fly over the Rainbow

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The following poetic narrative/performance ritual tells the counter-story of the “hidden curriculum” (Henry, 1998; Maparyan, 2012) that Black women commonly integrate into their lives and work as educators. Written in “the” collective voice of Black women educators, this narrative illustrates and legitimizes the hidden curriculum as a tool of critical education, leadership development, and recovery from the tripartite oppressions of race, class, and gender/s. The hidden curriculum refers to Black women who engage in motherwork (Collins, 2000) and mothering the mind (Brown, 1991), while fulfilling the responsibilities of their teaching posts from a range of structural categories—contingency faculty, pre-tenured faculty, senior faculty, and so on. The pedagogical elements of the hidden curriculum span a

The title of this work and the prelude’s use of “woman in red” and so on signifies Ntozake Shange’s groundbreaking performance piece *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf: a choreopoem* (1989, University of Michigan).

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host of educational and leadership development spheres such as bi- or polyculturalism (DuBois, 1903), racial identity development, intra- and intercultural politics, socialization to and navigation of race-gender identity within the dominant culture (Dunbar, 1998), presentation of self, and preparation for change agency and social justice leadership. Most significantly, this whole-person curricular approach transcends the bounds of the traditional classroom. Although this work exists in addition to formal teaching responsibilities, this performance ritual recasts this cultural woman-to-woman pedagogical process beyond the notion of the “extra burden” of mentoring and service disproportionately occurring among Black women faculty. Rather it is re-contextualized to portray and further theorize womanist pedagogies of relational social change and resistance that Black women integrate as a stream of their teaching praxis in academe. By employing a womanist tale of Motherline leadership development, cross-generational bonding for political resistance, and woman-to-woman healing, this piece relays the costs, risks, and rewards of living out the core pedagogical values of the hidden curriculum. Ultimately, the spoken word tradition conveys a multiplicity of embodied experience, emotionality, ways of knowing, and cultural resonance that creates possibilities for readers to gain cultural insider insight. In this way, this piece itself is pedagogy—as it delineates and validates for readers subjugated knowledge occurring “beneath” the ivory tower.

PRELUDE

Woman in Red.¹ “If we are to contend in theory and practice, with the educational difficulties of students from working class and racialized communities ...”

Woman in Black. “...we must seek answers as Freire argued, within the long histories of economic, social, and political oppression ... as they currently exist within our own lives and that of our students.”

Woman in Green. “This concept of culture links decolonizing education to communal and ancestral knowledge ...”

—Antonia Darder, educator (Darder, 2013, p. i)²

[Woman in Red enters stage left and speaks this poem into mythopoetic being. She symbolizes one of many Black women in the academy. And so, where indicated, should one dare to perform this choreopedagogy ... enter another woman in Red, and then in Black, and then in Green ... in performance spaces of your own creation.]

They seek the thing that has no name.

as if we carry it in our pockets.

they are the girls inter/rupted
the ones we set out to find
there is within each one a mother-less child

when they see us, recognition lights their eyes
they are willing to lay their heads upon our knees
to eat from our hands
they lay their purple gratitude over our shoulders
find us tender
even in the tough-teaching-trenches
they have requested

this is their registration.

some days, our hands are empty, but our minds work
to find something in the wind
the rustle of the trees
their memory of ancestral love
to manifest the needed morsel.

seeing us bloom above ground
is proof
that sunlight waits for them
and they push
through rock.

they
who mostly had a someone somewhere in the desert hegemony
produced
who maybe had a big mama, a nana, a teacher, a counselor, a pah-pah
whose houses had no mirrors³, who spoke into the winds of time
“you is kind, you is smart, you is important.”⁴”

Those who made their lives mana, we salute. You are modern day
Underground
Railroad. They came over on you.

but still far too many suckled on mother-loss
on the wire mesh monkey
matrix of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism

misogyny/ism, white supremacy/ism
that their mothers suckled on and their mothers

many loved hard,
those mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, grandmothers
siblings, saviors, saints, sinners,
loved those ravaged by the gynocide of imperialism
the dross of enslavement, the tazing of colonization, the brutality of the
new jim crow

know they, you, us, we, were never intended to feel the warmth of the sun
they who saw their communities eviscerated by matricide, patricide
knew its offspring
rejection, abandon, addiction, abuse, betrayal,
failed presence, spirit-absence, and desecration
intended to subjugate.

BUT their refusal to be obliterated
rocked the world
when it learned they had *matriculated*.

and they came!

Finding us
there
always there
b/cause we had blasted through brick and mortar,
and the thousand fiery hoops of advanced degrees
to be t/heir
they came
bearing unanswerable questions
hearing uncapturable answers
wrapping up in us to stay warm in institutions designed for
their invalid/ation

*[Woman in Red leaves stage left as Woman in Green simultane-
ously enters stage right. The Woman in Green begins]*

Some will ask
but what need have they of healing?
in these ivory'd towers of

care,
 civic engagement, global understanding, diversity and inclusion, multi-
 cultural dialogues,
 cross cultural celebrations, and sharing across differences.
 others will ask in their ivy covered innocence,
 what manner of crimes occur within our hallowed havens?
 some will seek to
 pathologize the injured
 as not having the resilience to receive their opportunity
read, lift themselves with their own boot straps
 dance backwards in their own stilettos
write failure to thrive,
 editorialize as a “special need,”
theorize as an over reliance on
 the mother nurture of “the STRONG Black woman.”

How could the “the world see otherwise,⁵”?
 When the lashings of colonization we hear in the background
 come from teachers, to tutors, from advisors to conductors, from coun-
 selors to coaches, from teammates to roommates, from referees to res-
 life, work-study to workouts,
 from the arts to activism, from feminists to lovers, and sometimes
 woundings
 in “the house of a friend.”⁶
 myriad M I C R O aggressions and structural oppressions
 that carry the toxic tinctures of annihilation, spirit disconfirmation,
 via hypervisibility, invisibility, multiplicative demands for
 performances of belonging,
 is it her Blackness, her womanness, her gayness, her trans, do her class
 markers place her here? There? Is she too much? not enough
 of the constructions others need?
 and what cumulative pressures to acculturate/assimilate/failure to
 infiltrate/encapsulate
 learn the monocultural stand/ards
 make the perfect calculations that find all
 papers, tasks, meetings, appointments, projects, capstones, classroom
 vocalizations,
 EXTRA curricular machinations
 offered in a timely fashion, performed at the speed of white
 despite

parental support and advice, familial backing, issues back home, playing
 academic catch up in multiple arenas, depression, post-traumatic stress
 called living while Black & female, work-life balance of students as
 whole persons,
 are all the same
 after all, one size *does* fit all doesn't it?

And so, we close ranks with any who will assist in the soul surgery
 necessary for removal of the cumulative incursions of multiple "isms"
 embedded in the day-to-day
 and now in the "souls of Black folks"⁷

If you have joined us. You will know that
this is our third shift!⁸

But only in the un/nameable
 do we gather the injured unto ourselves.
 applying balm to lacerated hearts
 that for all their wisdom, expected more
 on crossing into Canada.

*[Woman in Green leaves stage left as a Woman in Purple simul-
 taneously enters stage right. The Woman in Purple begins]*

Finding them
 we begin
 filling holes in the ritual hut with mud
 preparing the bath
 creating the circle.
 all ages, sizes, skin colors, religions, socio-economic classes, sexual(i)ties
 We come
 permed, natural, wigged, braided, loc/ed, hair-pieced, mohawked,
 bald, even weaved
 All womanist-all the time
 no two alike
 carrying first and foremost, the intellectual feast
 in the community college, city college, state college, ivy league, liberal
 arts, HBCU, PWI, seminary, professional school, religious private, "for
 profit" and maybe even online degree
 we teach real

we have no care for whether “they” deem us
 visiting, pre-tenured, contingency, continuing contract, partner-hire-
 we-had-to-find-something-for-her-to-keep-him/her, abd, ed.d., full-
 professor, administrator-with-some-teaching-responsibilities.

Ha!

the college’s mission statement is fulfilled. most of us can re/cite it.
 Intersectionality of purpose is drill.

What they call win-win,
 we know as both/and. Read. “Yes. We can!”

We teach hard, nurture harder, train-up
 we prevent ejection, and expatriation, attrition and revolving door
 politics of tuition-in/student-out/loans-begin
 we know the real deal
 of our habitats
 mind our p’s and q’s, just enough
 to re-main
 and bring our curriculum of correction, reformation, protection,
 liberation
 and sometimes just personal presentation
 cause it’s really about the acculturative capital of taste,
 and coming to a style of one’s own, border crossing included.

As we teach, we are also meeting, greeting, commuting, standing in the
 gap, paying dues and cultural taxation, fighting for our place,
 uplifting, promoting anti-racism, facing the triple jeopardies, negotiat-
 ing cultural capital, sometimes finding the gates barred, the ivory tower
 too high, the air behind its walls too toxic,
 sometimes succumbing
 some have to keep it moving, avoid annihilation, begin anew, seek the
 long term space, or declare ourselves scholars-at-large, land in multiple
 institutions with our hidden curriculum in our bags.

throughout, we hold oppositional space within institutional space⁹
 for men, women, white, black, red, yellow, abled-differently, valued dif-
 ferently, differing values
 for peers, colleagues, support staff, administrators
 we align, co-labor, co/inspire to correct in/justice
 we stay awake.

set out to right the wrongs of educational injustice
 de-ice the likelihood of failure
 brought on by young jim who leaves no child left (behind)
 called
 teaching to the test, underfunded districts, closed schools, busing,
 revised “tracking,” unchecked violence, sexual assault, bullying, drugs,
 school embedded gang violence, over policed student behavior that
 places youth in the penal system to soon, where “no tolerance” trans-
 lates into no way out.

fending against the “extra burden” that chases and chains the Black
 female academic and those who wear the colors of the universe on our
 bodies,

we somehow manage
 to reach for each/other
 the way someone reached for us, and because of who didn’t

we read the need, assess the damages,
 put out tentacles to the tentative
 coax in from the wilderness
 build contexts out of kindling
 light the hearth
 the true-real as major
 101 through the capstone
 racial identity development required!

*[Woman in Purple leaves stage left as a Woman in Yellow simul-
 taneously enters stage right. The Woman in Yellow begins]*

when they arrive
 they are specific
 they want lens to see
 eagle or ant, bird’s eye or mouse
 their hearts beat for voice
 self-efficacy, change agency,
 they run to world-shape, despite the label of intimidate
 hone their courage to create
 pull town, gown, community, margins, worlds
 into view

They work overtime, overload, and over
 Joy. Hurting, working, resisting, working, healing, working. Sometimes
 recognized.

always baptized by their longing for
 a just world order.

no two curricula are alike despite
 the common thread weaving world views into canopy
 covering ella's¹⁰ daughters' daughters
 with tools of resistance sealed in the canon of critical theory, "words of
 fire¹¹," womanist/Black
 feminist thought, critical race theory, anti-racism praxis, strategies to
 counter hegemony, to straddle borderlands, to queer theory, to trans-
 nationalism and global-ize feminisms
 to heal the crack in the cosmic egg.

methodologies
 stitched, knitted, crocheted, quilted, baked,
 canned, plowed, milled, cotton-picked, sugar-caned harvested, rice
 paddy worked, boogied, rapped, rocked, tapped, rhymed, stroked,
 stoked, turned, preached

and
 taught.

timeless tenets passed down by our sojourners and harrietts, our anna
 julias and our amy jacques, our ida-bs, our pauli/s and our aileen/s,
 our rosa/s, coretta/s, and betty/s, our fannie lou/s, daisy/s, and
 diane/s, our ericka's, angela/s and assata/s, our unbossed¹² shirley/s,
 our nikki/s, sonia/s, audre/s, alice/s, maya/s, delores/s, bell/s,
 patricia/s, june/s, sylvia/s and gloria/s and all the allomothers¹³
 and all the unseen,

unnamed,

stalwart ones

Workers of subju/gated knowledge under
 ground

like how to turn in

toward the gaping wound

how with hands bound, to pull the introject out of one's back

and what does compassion plus outrage squared look like in daily life?

[Woman in Purple leaves stage left as three women in white enter simultaneously stage right. The first Woman in White steps forward from the others and speaks]

With all, we raise the hymn of the salt eaters

“Sistah do you wanna be healed?”¹⁴

[All three women say
this line in unison]

the choice is theirs

[Woman in White # 1
resumes]

we rejoice

Sistah, do you own who you are
the choice is yours

[All three women]
[Woman in White # 1
resumes]

we anoint

They awaken in our arms
armed

anew with the tradition that cannot be named¹⁵

or taken.

on the next assault they rise more quickly

[Woman in White # 2
steps forward]

easily carrying both food and arsenal
shielding their backs while facing forward
uncompromising warriors for peace
And now

[Woman in White # 3
steps forward]

they come to us in the days before battle
laying their plans across the kitchen table
seeking council

fire lights the shadows as we talk

help them to anticipate and side-step javelins of oppression
geared for those who feel the fire next time¹⁶ before it begins

who feed the bonfires of self-love
necessary for nationhood to survive
and give birth

and now they come on the dawn of victory/s

[Woman in White # 1,
steps forward]

regaling, hailing, querying modes of leadership

we listen, help to mend the fabric where the clarity of our resistance wears thin

knowing still

“even their errors are correct¹⁷”

[All three women say this line in unison]

When they come with a wounded sister

[Woman in White # 2 steps forward]

slung across their back

staying only long enough for us to begin

the ritual, the bond, the long journey

we respond

begin

again

soon

these daughters

turn to humus

in our fertile soil

push up the young shoots

of a new day

carry us

into their time,

place, age

return to comm/unity

[All three women say these lines in unison]

return to nationstates

turn in to universes.

And we continue whispering the something that has no name.

[Woman in White # 1]

And we begin anew.

[Woman in White # 2]

And we begin an/old

[Woman in White # 3]

And we begin

[Woman in White # 1]

And we whisper the something

[Women in White #s 1 and 2]

that has no name

[Woman in White # 3]

And we whisper the something

[Woman in White #s 2 and 3]

back to women of color peers who may need the same kind of race-gender-attuned healing and leadership development. Ultimately, these women students are more able to support others across identities and contribute to the entirety of educational institutions via whatever pockets of influence the students have access to as they learn to work their own change agency.

The current academy faces a crisis of access, retention (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013, 2014), and the provision of an environment that can accept, sustain, and support all students regardless of how they learn, their socio-economic needs, their generational status, the variations of prior educational preparation, and their socio-cultural (nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, gender/s and sexualities, or age) backgrounds (Butler, 2013). The spate of recent student protests across the nation relative to the climate of these institutions, the disproportionately few faculty of color, and the everyday racism and incidents of racial bias call for new levels of cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2010; Jabbar & Hardaker, 2013) in higher education. Such student activism also calls for holding environments where students across all identities can grow and thrive throughout their educational experience.

While institutions are making some progress toward institutionalization of concrete resources and support across social identities (e.g. inclusive bathrooms, clothes pantries for interview attire, food pantries for food-challenged students), the need for culturally relevant educational (Ladson-Billings, 1992) and leadership development among students across identities remains. Within communities of color and/or marginalized communities there may be invisible or underutilized models of teaching that address these students' particular needs for academic and leadership development. For example, in Black communities, there is a rich history of educators from pre-K through post-secondary education drawing upon culturally relevant historical models of education and adapting them for use in higher education (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Walker, 1996). The ways in which Black women educators in higher education work with their Black women students is one such adaptive model.

This performance ritual portrays how such a model of Black-woman-to-Black-woman, educator-to-student culturally relevant pedagogy works beyond the classroom (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Maparyan, 2012). In general, the workings of this "hidden curriculum" (Henry, 1998) remain largely invisible to the mainstream academic community. One reason for this is that it includes but also transcends the traditional classroom. Rather it takes place within the context of a relation-

ship, and the mutuality of discovery among the educator Motherline that some Black women actively seek a form of academic and leadership development. To conduct this underground-yet-in-plain-view work, Black women educators draw upon and apply what Barbara Omolade (1994) calls “the tradition that has no name.” Overall, this tradition springs from Motherline tutelage well-documented in sociological and anthropological literature as an existential experience among women across cultures (King & Ferguson, 2011; Lowinsky, 1992). Motherline tutelage refers to the gendered cultural transmission of knowledge that women pass on to (usually) younger generations of women so that they might survive oppression, thrive, and bring their talents, gifts, and leadership into the world. This is the tradition that derived from such iconic Civil Rights leaders as Ella Baker—known as the Fundi (Grant, 1986)—an esteemed teacher who passes on knowledge to help an entire people survive, progress, and transform the structures of hegemony.

Among Black communities this tradition has been variously referred to as mothering the mind (Brown, 1991), political motherwork (Collins, 2000), kitchen table deep talk (King & Ferguson, 2011), motherwit (Maparyan, 2012), and other signifiers of culturally honed knowledge and adult development transmission systems whose purpose is personal and political, individual and collective. Between Black women it takes on the added urgency of restoring their self-hood, especially those who are “committed to survival and wholeness of entire people” (Walker, 1983, p. xii). For it is their very exertion of agency in the service of a vision for collective uplift in a world often hostile to their presence that puts such women students at even greater risk. In the academy, this tradition becomes a “curriculum” that Black women engage for their Black women students. Here is where many Black women educators take up the mantle of leadership development. They engage in this work by choice, even though it stretches their own capacities to be retained in the academy. And they engage in this work intentionally—with a pedagogical agenda that is twofold. First, it attends to the restoration of self-hood infusing students with belief in their capacity for agency, and understanding of one’s self as a scholar despite various forms of epistemic violence that denote otherwise. Second, it supports students’ choice to apply their academic knowledge in ways that reflect womanist or Black Feminist goals such as collective uplift, social change, and social justice.

Gaining a mere “edimication” or becoming “an educated fool” is the way Black communities signify an education that does not express wisdom. Culturally, wisdom seeks to uplift the collective or promote justice—not at the expense of the individual, but as intertwined and inseparable (Hill Collins, 2000; Maparyan, 2012). The strategies of the curriculum that has no name require the Black woman educator to collaborate with others across the university to support the holistic development of students from the margins. In the present creative piece, the focus is Black women’s work with same race women students. However, the Black feminist/womanist agenda extends itself to many groups banished from authentic recognition, and validation. While the focus of this Motherline tutelage is Black women, this dialogical teaching and learning must be read diasporically and transculturally. Black includes the multiplicative heritages of the Diaspora (e.g. Afro-German, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin). And transcultural means that some white women students and women of color who are not Black move into this dialogical learning motif in ways very similar to Black women. Some of the students come from majority Black or very diverse communities (e.g. attended predominately Black high schools, found homeplace in their lives with Black educators, coaches, mentors, teachers, or caretakers). Others find that their anti-racist core values and alignment with womanist philosophical tenets as the form of feminism they live out in their lives makes them seek connections with Black women faculty and find a place at the kitchen table. And so this dialogical curriculum is at once culturally focused and flexible. In terms of breadth its practices apply to the many ways systems of academic hegemony penalize or expel those without proper educational preparation and/or social capital to navigate the culture of the ivory tower. It also extends to those who may not be Black or women, but who pay the price of marginality in other ways and who seek the curriculum that has no name. Nevertheless, Black women have something special to offer to each other. They bring the potential for a deep and validating knowledge of each other’s experience. As Audre Lorde puts it: “I was not meant to be alone without you who understand” (Lorde, 1978, p. 34).

The curriculum that has no name reframes and redefines classroom teaching practices, just as it defines and makes visible alternative cultural spaces of education and learning. These are the kitchen tables or other

“third spaces” that exist beyond the binaries of mainstream society. And so, a marker of Black women’s pedagogies is its mobility, as well as its transgressive and transformative capacity. That is, as the student recovers from cumulative injuries of continual disconfirmation about how they perform their identities, their academic work, the academy’s exclusion of their bodies, minds, and ways of knowing (e.g. how they think, speak, learn, produce knowledge), they begin to come to voice and find their own centering as a scholar. Their difficult experiences in finding their intellectual grounding often occur in combination with other systemic barriers such as financial issues at college or with their families back home, discriminatory treatment, lack of access to the college’s resources, and needs for employment that compete with academics, extra-curriculars, or taking full advantage of college life.

It may seem as if such culturally and individually customized teaching might only serve to drain Black women faculty members who already encounter the “extra burden” of service documented as occurring for educators of color (Williams June, 2015; King et al., 2002). However, the process of teaching the curriculum that has no name can be mutually rejuvenating. The mutuality that is possible occurs incrementally throughout the course of the relationship. And given their different positions as faculty and student, it may not be realized in what we consider a reciprocal relationship until well after the student graduates. Yet some level of mutuality begins when the Motherline faculty sees the transformation that is occurring within the student. This bearing witness to the student’s academic and leadership development may occur in myriad places such as the classroom, serving on a committee together, within a public forum or discussion, or even within the context of student activism on or off campus.

Finally, there is the gratification of spending time in the company of Black women students coming into their own. Students-in-tutelage may connect with another student in ways that help shed light on how to navigate some aspect of college life with that peer. Seeing the support and teachings shared is also gratifying. At the cultural level, mutuality exists in the long-term view of collective uplift itself. As Ella Baker best put it: “The struggle is eternal. The tribe increase[s]. Somebody else carries on.”²⁰ Working with those who will carry on is deeply gratifying to Black women whose cultural identities derive from the organizing principle “I am because we are, and because we are therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1970).

Within the context of the Black women's curriculum that has no name, these women students begin to flourish, believe in their abilities despite external disconfirmation, and come into a critical consciousness that can critique the very institutions of higher learning themselves. Such Black women students also begin to turn their attention to making their campuses a better place. They begin to work with the Motherline to think through their own oppositional capacities, change agent strategic maneuvers, and apply humanizing action to counter institutionalized oppression within higher education and beyond. The kind of work Black women are doing with their students clearly falls within the spectrum of high-impact practices that institutions of higher learning now seek. High-impact practices are commonly known to offer students such things as purposeful learning, meaningful interaction with peers, and developmental relations with professors to engage in meaning-making, deep reflection and deconstruction of their experiences in the context of solving problems, and engaging in collective works of leadership and social change (Harper, 2009). Institutions sometimes recognize the inequitable distribution of such high-impact practices across the diversities of their student bodies (e.g. differences in who goes abroad, who obtains off campus internships, who obtains paid internships, who is selected for competitive funding for research or experiential opportunities). And so this narrative spells out how Black women help to apply high-impact practices in the margins of same race-gender relations.

This "story" is written as a performance, because in as much as it is situated within the deep cultural space of Black collective memory throughout the Diaspora, it is also a communal story. It expresses how Black women use their positionality within the academy to work with their colleagues across multiple identities. Together, we each work to bring the mission of our academic institutions to life. Most of our institutions espouse a purpose to reach all of the students we matriculate, yet the capacity for doing this varies greatly. Moreover, the institutionalization of the matrices of race, class, gender/s oppression can actively work against this stated mission. Ritualizing this deeply connected teaching allows readers of many other backgrounds to have a more enlivened encounter with the story being told. It enlarges the potential for shared experience and activation of our intersubjectivities. The choreo-poem is our invitation into the dance of culture. Cultural novice and insider share what Maparyan (2012) calls the "logic of womanism," which she describes as

“experiential, narrative, ecological, moral, emotional, communal, and mystical” (p. 40).

And what of action? We must eventually come to that. How is this choreo-pedagogy a call to action? And if it is such, what actions? First, ritualizing this narrative creates a site for connected knowing, for feelings, intuition, emotional intelligence, and the multiple ways in which art gives us an encounter that strikes a human chord. For it is the very absence of “getting it” emotionally, when cultural outsiders are seeking to understand, that keeps us from being able to reimagine and redefine the problems and solutions of the work we do across our social identities in the academy. This narrative portends future action by bringing alive the experiential. For it is first within the embodied knowledge of our intersectionality that we come to get a glimmer of what we are not. Embodied experience is the first signifier that something of cultural depth is occurring that is “not like us.” And in that borderland between our differences (Anzaldua, 1990) we may learn just enough to collaborate on solutions, and possibilities.

By implication, the knowledge of what Black women educators are doing is a call for action on the part of institutions. It asks how institutions can become intentional in providing an environment that does not engage in cultural taxation. The metaphor of cultural taxation points to the kinds of sanctions (intentional and unintentional) that Black women educators pay for their presence as “culturally different others” in higher education. *One form* of cultural difference is their insistence on “giving back” to students from their own cultural or social identity groups. The story of Black women engaged in helping the institution fulfill its mission of serving all students across identities poses an opportunity for institutions to engage in an equally ethical response. That is, how can institutions of higher learning recognize, respect, support, incentivize, and reward their Black women faculty and safeguard them from unnecessary overload? Can institutional understanding of Black women faculty members’ cultural pedagogy inform institutions in ways that reduce negative outcomes in tenure and/or promotion, or during the contract renewal process for visiting or part-time faculty/instructors? Often retention of faculty from marginalized groups fails for lack of institutional sight. That is, the capacity to see what and how faculty, such as Black women, contribute to the work of the institution. And *all* of these faculty who contribute in the spheres of the curriculum that has no name benefit the university at a deep level.

Crafting such solutions requires community across identities, and across positions within higher education (e.g. across administrations, faculty, staff, students). And so the style in which this piece is written is meant to create or at least invite community. The invitation calls us to participate in a temporary liminal space where we come together within and across cultures for acclamation of one culture's approach. We come together in this imagined performative community to first shift the dialogue so that the voices of Black women faculty are at the center. And then we ritualize the voices so as to magnify them for communal engagement. Hence this narrative elevates the human experience of how one marginalized group builds bridges for their students to the center of things—all the while expanding, pluralizing, and democratizing what the center can now mean for these scholar-leaders in development. Seeing one group's approach helps us reimagine cultural insider work for many groups in these contemporary times. Such a tale formed to create a collective liberatory experience for *all* participants regardless of identity is written in a “tongue of its own.” As bell hooks (1989) states:

The most important of our work—the work of liberation—demands of us that we make a new language, that we create the oppositional discourse, the liberatory voice. Fundamentally, the oppressed person who has moved from object to subject speaks to us in a new way. This speech, this liberatory voice, emerges only when the oppressed experience self-recovery. (p. 29)

Toward this end, the evocative language of performance ritual makes the unseen pedagogy of recovery from oppression seen. At the same time this voice destabilizes the dichotomies of cultural insider and cultural outsider. For in opening this space to create a ritual that mirrors the liminality of Black woman educators engaged in motherwork, a space is similarly opened to the reader. In this space (whether imagined or literally performed), we all participate in a collective holding environment where mutual understanding can surface. Here we have a portal to see our way more fully into each other's lives. Here we have a communal foundation. Here we have an experiential assemblage, a third space of our own to celebrate Black women students' educational journey from the margins to the center of their own empowered selves. A journey that takes place on the wings of Black women educators' pedagogical methods honed for just such flight!

NOTES

1. In Ntozake Shange's pioneering work, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf: a choreo-poem* (1989, University of Michigan), the seven African American women are designated by a color that they wear rather than a name: the woman in red, woman in orange, woman in yellow, woman in green, woman in blue, woman in brown, and woman in purple. The choreo-pedagogy offered in the present piece intends to give tribute to Shange's canonical womanist and Black feminist literary contribution. This canonical work ritualized the stories of women of color within their historical, material, personal, and political contexts. For this reason, the artistic strategy originating in Shange's work is re-employed here to signify its precedence and resonance with this work.
2. From *Darder, Antonia (2013) Critical Leadership for Social Justice and Community Empowerment*. Social Policy, Education and Curriculum Research Unit. North Dartmouth: Centre for Policy Analyses/U Mass Dartmouth, <http://www.umassd.edu/universitysearch/?q=antonia%20darder>
3. This phrase refers to the title and lyrics of a song entitled "There Were No Mirrors in My Nana's House" by the legendary acapella group Sweet Honey in the Rock. This song is included on their album *Still on the Journey*, 1993, composed by Dr. Ysaye M. Barnwell, published by Barnwell's Notes, under the label Earthbeat.
4. This line is a quote from the 2011 film *The Help*, directed and written by Tate Taylor, and adapted from the novel *The Help*, written by Kathryn Stockett (2009).
5. Phrase used in the poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1872–1906, entitled "We Wear the Mask." This poem lives in the canon of Black literature, a precursor to the explosion of art during the Harlem Renaissance.
6. "Wounded in the House of a Friend" (1995) is the title of the title poem for a book of the same name by Sonia Sanchez, poet, essayist, activist, born in 1934, and associated with the Black Arts Movement.
7. *The Souls of Black Folks* is the title of a book first published in 1903. The author is W.E.B. DuBois, internationally renowned scholar and activist, prolific writer, and iconically named as the father of sociology.
8. See also: "Andrea's Third Shift: The Invisible Work of African-American Women in Higher Education," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* by Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, Eds, 2002.
9. Postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty coined this term in "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1984). This concept applies to the work of internal change agents or internal activists who fulfill their organizational responsibilities while working toward institutional change.

10. The reference to Ella refers to Civil Rights leader Ella Baker and by implication other Black women Civil Rights leaders who trained others to engage in community activism during the Civil Rights era. Such women leaders engaged in strategic leadership development work with women of the community, and the generation of leaders they trained are referred to as their daughters—commonly denoted by the phrase “Ella’s daughters.”
11. *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1995) is one of the texts within the canon of Black feminist and Black womanist thought. This text anthologizes the works of Black women activist-intellectuals from the 1830s to contemporary times and their contributions as the foremothers of Black feminist thought and praxis.
12. Signifier of Shirley Chisholm’s autobiography entitled *Unbought and Unbossed* (1970). Chisholm was the first major-party Black candidate for President of the United States and the first woman to run for the Democratic presidential nomination.
13. This list of women represents some of the iconic Black and Latina women activists and intellectuals from the canon of Black womanist and Black feminist thought. The list includes Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Anna Julia Cooper, Amy Jacques Garvey, Ida B. Wells, Pauli Murray, Aileen Clark Hernandez, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, Betty Shabazz, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Daisy Bates, Diane Nash, Ericka Huggins, Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, Shirley Chisholm, Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Delores Huerta, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, June Jordan, Sylvia Rivera, and Gloria Anzaldua.
14. This paraphrased quote is from the novel *The Salt Eaters* by Toni Cade Bambara.
15. “The Tradition that Has No Name” is referred to by Barbara Omolade, in her book *The Rising Song of African American Women* (1994) as the methods of activist tutelage occurring between Black women within their communities to engage in political action and social change. It is a tradition in which women taught others by actively doing the work of organizing communities, and through oral tradition and praxis. Since it was not “written down,” it remained nameless—known through relational transmission and outcomes rather than written words. Ella Baker’s work is a prime example of this tutelage, and women who learned from her are often referred to as “Ella’s daughters.” See footnote xii.
16. “The Fire Next Time” signifies the title of a book by African American writer James Baldwin (1963).
17. This quote is from a poem by Nikki Giovanni entitled “Ego Tripping (there may be a reason why)” published in 1972 in a collection of poetry titled *My House: Poems*, NY: Morrow.

18. “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” is an essay. In this essay she speaks to the power of being with our silence, and the deeply reflective process of coming to voice what that silence is as a precursor to clear, centered, and effective action in the world.
19. Thank you to those who gave me feedback or helped to edit earlier drafts of this work: Twisha Asher, Brooke Hayes, Vianna Alcantara, and Jasmine M. McGhee of my spiritual daughterline; beloved womanist intern Rene Guo; and JoAnne Henry, Ph.D., Fareeda Griffith, Ph.D., and S. Alease Ferguson, Ph.D., my sisters in the academic Motherline. Thank you to all the men who work in complementarity with the Motherline, and whose efforts are as tireless, as committed, and as profound. To those who give support, nurture, and Fatherline contributions to students across gender/s, and to those of us who are your colleagues—we appreciate you.
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20. [ThinkExist.com](http://en.thinkexist.com/quotations/the-struggle-is-eternal-the-tribe-increase/895851.html) Quotations. “Ella Baker quotes.” [think/exist.com/quotation/the-struggle-is-eternal-the-tribe-increase/895851.html](http://en.thinkexist.com/quotations/the-struggle-is-eternal-the-tribe-increase/895851.html) accessed August 21, 2017.

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